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Synchronic Microvariation, Gradualness of Change and the Relation between the Two: Reflexes of Latin HABERE in Northern Italo-Romance

Sandra Paoli 

Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

ABSTRACT

Saussure's structuralist dichotomous view of synchrony and diachrony has, overall, long been abandoned, and research within the theory of grammaticalization has brought to the fore the close interconnections between the two. In more recent years, a great deal of attention has been devoted to capturing and expressing the nature of the interface between synchrony and diachrony, linking a notion traditionally associated with the synchronic architecture of grammar — *gradience* — and one linked to diachronic change — *gradualness*. Against this general background, this article explores the relation between synchrony and diachrony focusing on the discontinuity that can arise through language change. The objects of the research are the reflexes of Latin HABERE in northern Italo-Romance and their diachronic development in lexical, perfective, and modal auxiliary uses. The outcome of the investigation is that while macro differences (lexical versus auxiliary) are maintained, micro ones (within lexical) are more vulnerable to being lost.

SOMMARIO

La visione dicotomica della sincronia e diacronia, tipica dello strutturalismo saussuriano, è ormai stata abbandonata, e la ricerca nell'ambito della grammaticalizzazione ha confermato le loro vaste interconnessioni ed interdipendenza. In anni più recenti, la natura dell'interfaccia fra le due dimensioni è stata oggetto di molta attenzione, in particolar modo la relazione fra una nozione tradizionalmente associata all'architettura grammaticale *sincronia*, *gradience*, e una legata al cambiamento diacronico, *gradualness*. In questo contesto, il presente contributo si prefigge di esplorare la relazione fra sincronia e diacronia dal punto di vista della discontinuità che può emergere durante il cambiamento linguistico. Il soggetto della ricerca discussa qui di seguito sono gli sviluppi italo-romanzi del verbo latino HABERE ed il loro iter diacronico, nelle forme lessicali, ausiliari e modali. L'esito della ricerca suggerisce che mentre le differenze macro (funzione lessicale contro ausiliare) vengono mantenute, quelle micro (all'interno della funzione lessicale) sono più soggette ad essere perse.

KEYWORDS

synchrony and diachrony; grammaticalization; Italo-Romance; reflexes of Latin HABERE; discontinuity; loss of function

PAROLE CHIAVE

sincronia e diacronia; grammaticalizzazione; italo-romanzo; sviluppi di HABERE; discontinuità; perdita di funzione

CONTACT Sandra Paoli  sandra.paoli@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

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Introduction

The connections between synchrony and diachrony have featured prominently in research encompassing sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, and dialectology, and studies on grammaticalization have firmly pushed aside the Saussurean dichotomous interpretation of the two.¹ More recently, the close links between the two have been highlighted, portraying the relationship not as a strict separation, but as a dynamic interaction in which the two are integrated: synchronic grammatical frameworks are necessary to understand how language changes, and diachronic data and processes can inform and provide evidence for theories of synchronic structure and acquisition.²

At the core of the conception of grammaticalization adopted in recent studies (as well as the role of speakers) is synchronic variation: variation is seen as the manifestation of the interface between synchrony and diachrony³ and the origin of all change.⁴ Related to these domains are the notions of gradualness and gradience, the former pertaining to the realm of diachronic change, in particular to its speed of instantiation, the latter being best understood as referring to synchronic variation, which, in turn, feeds into further diachronic changes.⁵ Conversely, synchronic gradience can reflect the gradualness of diachronic change, and the microvariation visible at the synchronic level for a given construction can be the result of the diachronic micro-steps followed by that same construction through time.⁶ The relation between synchrony and diachrony is not, however, necessarily linear: it is not always the case that the expression of a function will maintain at any given time distinctions that were marked at a previous stage of development. That is, it is possible for a function expressed by a given form to be lost, creating a discontinuity along the path of language change.

It is interesting to explore such instances of discontinuity, since it has been observed that in the process of language change some functions are more vulnerable than others to being lost. This suggests that whether a function is more likely to be lost or to persist over time is not random but could be related to the breadth of the scope of that function.⁷ More specifically, ‘the larger the scope of the function, the less likely it is to disappear’: while the encoding of a whole grammatical category may persist, the expression of a specific type within that grammatical category may not.⁸

This contribution, through an investigation of reflexes of Latin *HABERE* ‘have’ in northern Italo-Romance, focuses on a comparison between the synchronic microvariation witnessed at the diatopic level and the gradual diachronic change that the form has undergone. As well as offering a detailed description of both levels of variation, focusing especially on the diachronic development as a complement to a previous study,⁹ this article also aims to provide a testing bench for the suggestion of a hierarchy of functions in terms of their vulnerability to loss in the process of language change. Starting from an in-depth account of the synchronic realization of reflexes of Latin *HABERE* in northern Italo-Romance, the focus turns to tracing their development in one specific variety of Italo-Romance, Venetian, with a view to providing a detailed comparison of the distinctions encoded by the forms at both levels. In line with what has been already suggested, the evidence discussed and analysed here supports the idea that functions that are encoded at a lower level in the hierarchy are more open to being lost than functions encoded at a higher level. The specific object of investigation, reflexes of Latin *HABERE*, is of particular interest, and lends itself well to

such observations, given the diverse grammatical functions that the form has developed beyond its original meaning of possession across Romance.¹⁰

The article is structured in three parts: synchronic, diachronic, and a reflection on the relationship between the two. The synchronic data have been obtained from the *Atlant linguistisch dl ladin dolomitich y di dialec vejins II* 'Linguistic atlas of Dolomitic Ladin and neighbouring varieties II' (henceforth ALD-II).¹¹ The diachronic data have been extracted from a variety of texts dating between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, a mixture of collections of poems, theatrical plays, and prose written in Venetian, the variety of Italo-Romance spoken in the city of Venice.¹²

Synchronic Microvariation

Background

Throughout Northern Italy, two verbs meaning 'to have' are found: the first one, *avér* (and its variants *avére*, *avér*, *aváir*, *avái*, *avéi*, *e*, *ei*, *ör*, *aé*, *aér*, *er*, *avé*, *avöi*, *ver*, *vío*, *ve*), is a straightforward derivation from Latin HABERE through regular phonological change; the second one, *gavér* (and its variant *gavé*, *averghe*, *verghe*, etc.), has been interpreted as the result of the fusion of the locative *ghe* (cf. Italian *ci* 'there') on the direct reflexes of Latin HABERE.¹³ *Ghe* itself has been analysed as the reflex of Latin HIC, an adverbial with a deictic function related mainly to space, but that could also be used to refer to time: the adjacency of HIC and HABERE would cause the final velar in HIC, now in intervocalic position, to weaken and become voiced, yielding, eventually, the form *gavér*, much along the lines of *amiga* 'friend' from Latin AMICAM.

The development of the form with an initial velar, *gavér*, is a clear instance of grammaticalization,¹⁴ in which the original locative *ghe* underwent morphophonological reduction and gradual semantic bleaching, that resulted in the form *g*, and fused onto the direct reflex of Latin HABERE, *avér*, yielding *g + avér*. The degree of fusion of the two, as well as of the semantic bleaching of the original locative *ghe*, are, however, not uniform across Italo-Romance, and can be observed in the interaction of the G form with complement proclitics.

The coexistence of the forms *avér* and *gavér* (henceforth referred to as forms A and G, respectively¹⁵) has already been noted; its distribution has been interpreted as variously expressing sociolinguistic and geographical variation,¹⁶ and — at least for the variation witnessed within the auxiliary paradigm — phonological.¹⁷ The aim of this section is to explore the impact of morphosyntactic and semantic factors (such as the lexical or functional nature of the verb 'to have' (henceforth HAVE), the presence or absence of complement proclitics, and the infinitival form of the verb) on the distribution of the A and G forms, and to identify the possible parameters responsible for such variation. A series of implicational generalizations concludes the detailed description of the synchronic variation.¹⁸

Variables

Verb of 'Possession' versus Auxiliary Use

The main distinction that can be seen in the uses of HAVE is between a lexical verb of 'possession' and an auxiliary verb. This is the first area of variation that we explore.

Most of the G forms are to be found as the lexical realization of HAVE: out of the total 217 varieties¹⁹ included in ALD-II, the form expresses the lexical verb in 105 varieties (map 29, *Hai due belle trecce lunghe* ‘You have two beautiful long plaits’); of these, only 29 also have the G form as the auxiliary verb (map 517, *Abbiamo trascorso ...* ‘We have spent ...’), the other 76 using the A form instead.

When functioning as a lexical verb, HAVE expresses possession *sensu lato*. Further internal differentiations are possible, and the notion can be further broken down into concrete (or physical) possession (e.g. *avere molti soldi* ‘to have a lot of money’), abstract possession (e.g. *avere ragione* ‘to be right’ (lit. ‘to have reason’)), and inalienable possession (e.g. *avere le gambe lunghe* ‘to have long legs’).²⁰ At the synchronic level, however, there is no indication that the type of possession affects the choice of the form of HAVE: in all the dialects that use the G form as a lexical verb, it is consistently selected with all three types of possession. An example of this is the dialect spoken in Ponte di Legno (Lombardy, province of Brescia), location 27 on the map, in which possession is uniformly realized by the G form:

- (1) a. ... *garóm ...*
 ‘[When] we will have [more money ...]’,²¹ concrete possession, map 376
 b. *Ades el ga fresa.*
 ‘Now he is in a hurry’ (lit. ‘he has rush’), abstract possession, map 388
 c. *Go zù la os*
 ‘I have a hoarse voice’ (lit. ‘I have down the voice’), inalienable possession, map 156

In the same dialect, the auxiliary HAVE is realized as the A form:

- (2) a. *Forse el ará mes ...*
 ‘Perhaps he will have put [too much sugar]’, auxiliary, map 466
 b. *L’a finí ...*
 ‘He has finished [to peel potatoes ...]’, auxiliary, map 501

There are some varieties, however, in which both uses, lexical and auxiliary, are realized by the G form, as in the dialect spoken in Castelfranco Veneto (Veneto, province of Treviso), location 186 in the atlas:

- (3) a. *Gavarémo ...*
 ‘[When] we will have [more money ...]’, concrete possession, map 376
 b. *Deso a ga presa*
 ‘Now he is in a hurry (lit. ‘he has rush’), abstract possession, map 388
 c. *Go a vose rauca*
 ‘I have a hoarse voice’, inalienable possession, map 156
 d. *A ga finío*
 ‘He has finished [to peel potatoes ...]’, auxiliary, map 501

The distributional observation that the G form is used as an auxiliary only if it is also used as a lexical verb (but, crucially, not vice versa) holds for all varieties, and can be therefore taken as a descriptive generalization:

- (4) If in a variety the G form is used as an auxiliary, it will also be used as a lexical verb.

This is a robust distinction, suggesting that the function of distinguishing lexical from auxiliary usage is relevant and important for these varieties.

Presence versus Absence of Complement Proclitics

The second area of variation in the distribution of the two forms concerns co-occurrence with pronominal complement proclitics. The linguistic atlas includes all types of pronominal complement clitics: accusative, dative, reflexive,²² partitive, and dative and accusative clusters, but only in conjunction with the auxiliary use of the verb, as in the formation of the analytic *passato prossimo*. There are no co-occurrences of HAVE as a lexical verb with proclitics: we therefore only consider the interaction of instances of auxiliary HAVE and proclitics.

The general observation is that, in the majority of cases, the G form remains available with complement clitics if a variety already uses it when there are none, so either with an intransitive verb (e.g. map 762 [*Quando il cacciatore*] *ebbe sparato* [*gli cadde per terra il fucile*] '[When the hunter] had fired [the rifle fell on the ground]', e.g. *el gaveva sbarà*, Bassano del Grappa, point 182) or with a transitive verb followed by a full nominal phrase object (e.g. map 509 *Ha mangiato tutti i biscotti* 'S/He has eaten all the biscuits', e.g. *a ga magnà tuti i biscoti*, Bassano del Grappa, point 182).

There are two main exceptions to the above generalization. The first concerns the varieties spoken in four villages in the province of Brescia, in Lombardy (Breno, Tavérnole, Iseo, and Lumezzane), in which the G form is used when there are no complement proclitics and the A form is found whenever complement proclitics are present. This is outlined in (5): in (5a,b), with no complement proclitic, we find the G form (i.e. *ga*); in (5c–f), in the presence of a complement proclitic, we find the A form (i.e. *a*, *o*, and *et*). The data are from the dialect spoken in Lumezzane, point 41 on the maps.

- (5) a. *La ga maiát tötf i bihcotf...*
 'She has eaten all the biscuits [and then she felt ill]', map 509
 b. ... *al ga trat...*
 '[When the hunter] had fired [the rifle fell on the ground]', map 762
 c. ... *la m'a piát.*
 '[The bee] has stung me', accusative clitic, map 861
 d. ... *el t'a fato ö hganbét.*
 '[That bully] tripped you up', dative clitic, map 282
 e. *To l'o dada.*
 'I have given it to you', dative–accusative cluster, map 1054
 f. *Quata n'et maída?*
 'How much did you eat of it?', partitive clitic, map 544

A further exception is Ponzano (Veneto, province of Treviso, point 188), in which while a single accusative or dative clitic can co-occur with either the G or A form, with a dative–accusative cluster only the A form is found:

- (6) a. *O satu chi te a vist ... ?*
 'Do you know who has seen you [smoke cigarettes]?', accusative clitic, map 298
 b. *A me ga becá*
 '[The bee] has stung me', accusative clitic, map 861
 c. *El ghe ga credúo / El ghe a credúo*
 'He has believed him (lit. 'to him)', dative clitic, map 608
 d. *Te a o dada*
 'I have given it to you', dative–accusative cluster, map 1054
 e. *El me i a vendúi ...*
 'He has sold them to me [in the shop]', dative–accusative cluster, map 610

The second main exception concerns the partitive clitic, which, among all the complement proclitics, is the one that has the greatest impact on the occurrence of

the G form. Map 524, with the stimulus *Ne ho bevuto* [...] 'I have drunk of it [...]' shows how out of the total 29 varieties that use the G form for the auxiliary, only eight maintain it when it co-occurs with the partitive, compared to the 24–26 that maintain it with one of the other clitics. Assuming, as discussed above, that the G form is the result of a process of grammaticalization of the particle *g* (from the locative clitic *ghe*) and the A form, the general incompatibility of the partitive clitic with the G form may be due to a clash of features. The examples in (7) show the contrast between S. Biagio (point 190) which retains the G form with the partitive clitic (7a), and Luserna (point 118), which does not (7c), from map 524, in spite of both having the G form for the auxiliary when there are no clitics (7b and d), from map 501 (*Ha finito [di pelare le patate ed è andata via]* 'She has finished [to peel the potatoes and she has left]'):

- (7) a. *ne go bevú* ... (S. Biagio)
 b. *la ga fenío* ...
 c. *ghe n'ò bevú* ... (Luserna)
 d. *la ga finí* ...

There are a few varieties in which the G form is found with a partitive clitic, too. These are the dialects spoken in Asiago and Recoaro (Veneto, province of Vicenza), Cittadella (Veneto, province of Padua), S. Biagio (Veneto, province of Treviso), Portogruaro (Veneto, province of Venice), Pordenone (Friuli Venezia Giulia), and Fierozzo (Trentino, province of Trento): in these dialects, the G form has been extended to all contexts, lexical and auxiliary, with and without a complement clitic, irrespective of type. This is shown in the examples in (8) from Recoaro (point 173):

- (8) a. *Te ge* ...
 'You have [two beautiful long plaits]', possession, map 59
 b. *La ga magná tuti i biscoti* ...
 'She has eaten all the biscuits [and then she felt ill]', auxiliary no clitic, map 509
 c. *La me ga becé*.
 '[The bee] has stung me', accusative clitic, map 861
 d. *Ghe ga credesto*.
 'S/he has believed him', dative clitic, map 608
 e. *Te la go da*.
 'I have given it to you', dative–accusative cluster, map 1054
 f. *El se ga sposá* ...
 'He got married [on the 28th July at 9.30]', reflexive clitic, map 24
 g. *Ne go bevú* ...
 'I have drunk [only one glass and not two] of it', partitive clitic, map 524

Figure 1 reports the frequency of occurrence of the G form as a lexical verb, as an auxiliary verb without a complement clitic, and then its co-occurrence with accusative, dative, reflexive, dative–accusative clusters and partitive clitics, respectively, from left to right.

Putting these observations, once again, in the form of two descriptive generalizations, we obtain the following:

- (9) If the G form is used as an auxiliary co-occurring with the partitive clitic *ne*, then it will also be used with all other types of complement clitics co-occurring with the auxiliary.
 (10) If the G form is used as an auxiliary co-occurring with a dative–accusative cluster, then it will also be used with the individual accusative and dative clitics co-occurring with the auxiliary.

These results confirm that the lexical versus auxiliary function of HAVE is significant at the quantitative level.

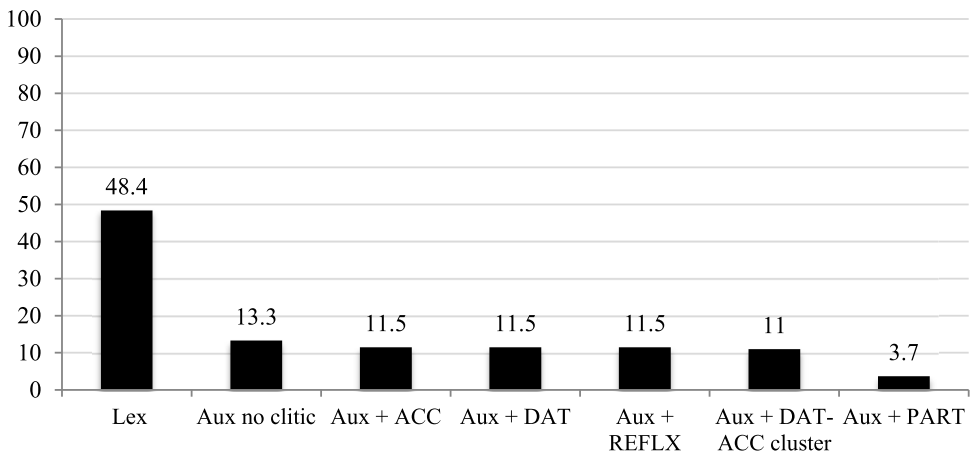


Figure 1. Distribution of the G form across combinations of clitics (%).

Infinitive Form

The third and last parameter of variation concerns the infinitive form of *HAVE*. The data available in the atlas afford the opportunity of observing both its lexical and its auxiliary use through maps 33 and 160 (*Avere le mestruazioni* ‘To be on (lit. ‘to have’) one’s period’ and *Avere la diarrea* ‘To have diarrhoea’) and map 1017 (*[Cosa ti dispiace] di aver dimenticato?*) ‘[What are you sorry] to have forgotten?’).

In line with what is already found for the finite forms, the G form is more frequent when the verb is lexical: out of the total of 217 varieties surveyed in the atlas, the G form for the auxiliary infinitive is only found in two, against 16 where it is used for the lexical infinitive. The A form remains the most used for the infinitive, be it lexical (47 points) or auxiliary (98 points).

Alongside the A and G forms, in the infinitive we also find a third form, in which the locative particle is enclitic on *HAVE*, yielding the form AG, *avérghe*, and its many variants (*verghe, erghe, averghi, e avirghe, ec, ic, auec, uec, aec, iga, aiga, aighe, eghi, ego, ega, averje, and averji*). The AG form is the second most frequent form, being used in 40 varieties for the lexical verb and seven for the auxiliary.

Summarizing the frequencies of the three forms with respect to their lexical and auxiliary uses, we obtain [Figure 2](#), which highlights that the A form is clearly dominant for the infinitive, especially when it is auxiliary *HAVE*.²³

There are instances in which the distribution of the forms overlaps. In Rovereto (Trentino, province of Trento, point 126), for the lexical infinitive all three are possible alternatives. In Aldeno (Trentino, province of Trento, point 189), both the G and the AG forms are produced for the lexical infinitive. In Treviso (Veneto, point 189), both the A and G forms are used for the auxiliary infinitive.

Although no clear patterns can be discerned — and, indeed, there are very few instances of such occurrences — this variation suggests that, in some areas, the boundaries between the domains of the different forms of *HAVE* are not rigid.

Taking a closer look at the infinitival AG form and considering its distribution, it is immediately apparent, somewhat trivially, that it only exists in those varieties that also have the G form for the finite lexical use. This relation does not hold in the opposite

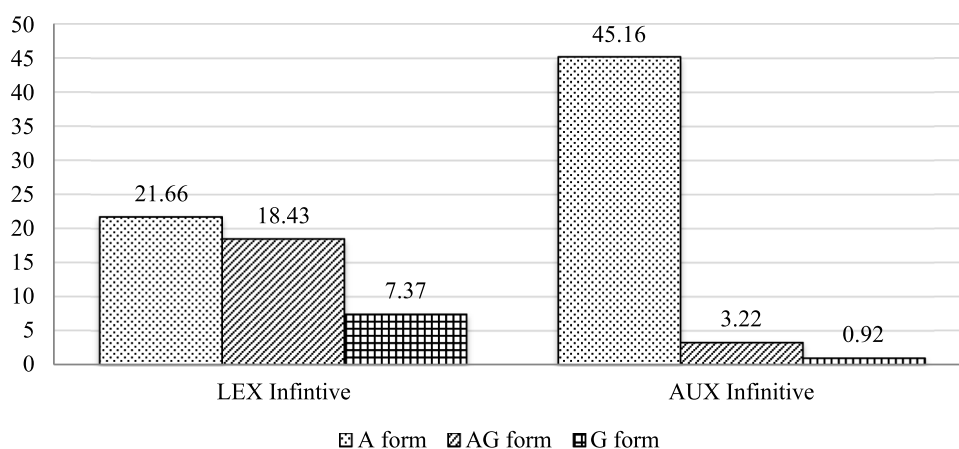


Figure 2. Percentages of the A, AG, and G forms in the infinitive.

direction, in that there are varieties that have the G form for the finite lexical use, but do not have the AG form in the infinitive. A further interesting correlation comes to light when making a comparison across parameters: there are three locations in the province of Brescia — Tavérnole, Iseo, and Lumezzane — that have the G form for the finite auxiliary with no clitics, the A form for the auxiliary with clitics, and the AG form for the auxiliary infinitive.²⁴ This pattern suggests that the particle *g(he)* has not fully fused with the verb *avér*, in that the presence of a proclitic inhibits its realization, yielding the A form. Furthermore, with a nonfinite form such as the infinitive, *g(he)* still behaves like a clitic, and is found enclitically, as is the case for clitic placement with nonfinite forms in Italo-Romance.

To conclude this descriptive part, let us summarize the last two observations in the form of two descriptive, implicational generalizations:

- (11) If the AG form is used as a lexical infinitive, the G form is used for the finite lexical verb;
- (12) If the AG form is used as an auxiliary infinitive, and the G form as a finite auxiliary, then only the A form is found as an auxiliary in the presence of a proclitic.

Discussion

The strongest results that emerge from the synchronic investigation are the distribution of the G form across lexical and auxiliary functions and the infinitive. Interpreting the numbers in Figure 1 as an indication that the original function of the G form was to differentiate the lexical from the auxiliary functions of HAVE, and considering the original spatial and temporal features of Latin HIC, it is therefore possible to infer that the addition of the locative particle to the verb HAVE originally served the function of lexicalizing the features associated with the locative argument of the verb.²⁵ Hence, the lexical subject of the verb was the overt manifestation of those features, expressing the location of a possessed entity, and the particle *g* would have represented the redundant expression of the purely abstract, morphosyntactic features.²⁶ This would tally with the low frequency of the G form as an auxiliary, a semantically vacuous form, especially with respect to the locative features of a verb of possession: an extension of the G form to the auxiliary would imply a weakening of the locative features of the *g*

particle, which would then simply become, in the mind of the speaker, part of the root of the verb and hence part of the morphological paradigm. A parallel weakening of *g*'s temporal features would have also led to the expansion of the G form to the infinitive.

There are therefore two concomitant diachronic processes,²⁷ one of gradual and partial semantic bleaching of Latin *HIC* into the locative *ghe* and further into the particle *g*, and one of fusion of this particle onto *HAVE*, both aspects of the process of grammaticalization. The microvariation of the distribution of the G form with respect to the auxiliary use of *HAVE*, complement proclitics, especially the partitive one (assumed to contain abstract locative features), and the infinitive, suggest that these two developments have reached different stages across northern Italo-Romance varieties, and the partial retention of semantic features of the particle *g* would lead to incompatibility of features in certain syntactic environments.²⁸

The geographical distribution of the variation in the realization of the G form suggests that the point of origin of the phenomenon, and epicentre of diffusion, is the city of Venice. Let us therefore turn to a diachronic exploration of the distribution of the A and G forms between the twelfth and nineteenth centuries through a detailed scrutiny of the selected texts. The focus will naturally fall on the emergence of the G form, its distribution compared to the already existing A form, and its development, as well as on the compatibility of the G form with complement proclitics and the infinitive. The diachronic investigation will also home in on possession and reveal a more nuanced view than is apparent in synchrony, leading to a reflection on the functions that are more vulnerable to being lost in diachrony.

Diachronic Development

The compound *g + avér* form was first attested in Venetian texts in the early 1500s,²⁹ which is confirmed by the data in the corpus used here.

To begin the diachronic discussion, it is useful to have a general overview of the developmental trajectory, in quantitative terms, of the A and G forms in their usages (lexical and auxiliary, both aspectual and modal) during these centuries. As well as the lexical and aspectual auxiliary functions, this diachronic section also investigates the deontic 'HAVE + infinitive' construction: although this modal usage was excluded from the synchronic investigation,³⁰ it is nevertheless interesting to include it and observe its development alongside the other two usages.

The numbers in [Figure 3](#) refer to the distribution of the A and G forms with respect to one another across the three usages: they are to be taken as an indicative overview only, as they do not consider, for example, the impact of the presence of clitics on the realization of the G form.

[Figure 3](#) shows that the G form was first and foremost used in the lexical function of *HAVE* and was extended to the auxiliary (and modal) usages only later. This fact immediately explains the synchronic generalization observed in (4) above: the presence of the G form as an auxiliary in a variety implies that it will necessarily also be used as a lexical verb, since, diachronically, the lexical usage precedes the auxiliary one. This can be seen even more clearly in [Figure 4](#), which highlights the trajectory of the G form across the centuries and the three functions, and shows that the earliest attestations of *g + avér* are instances of its lexical usage.

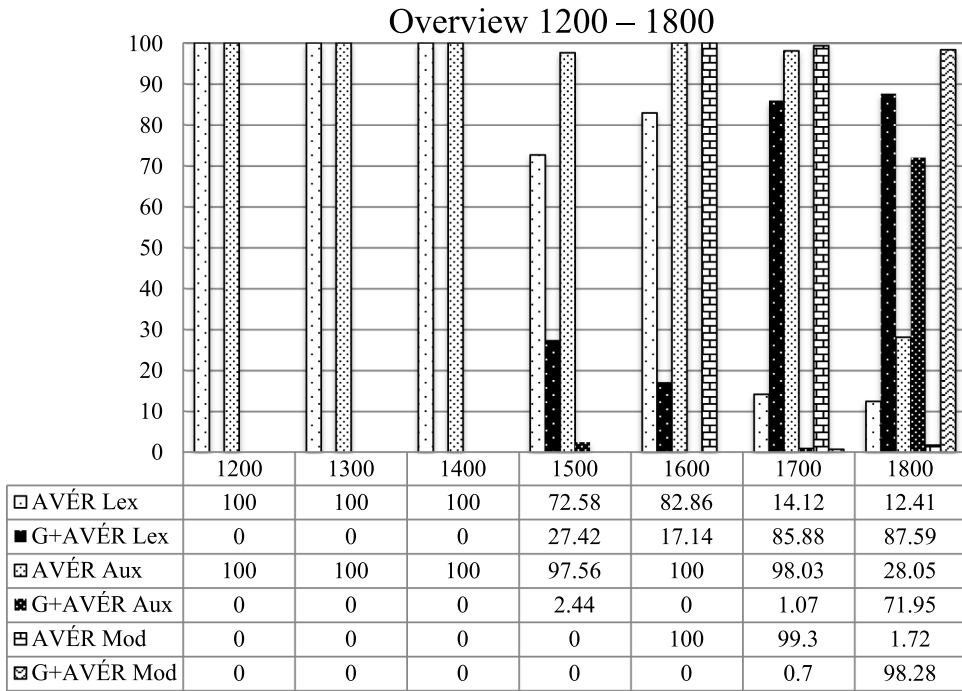


Figure 3. Overview of occurrence of A and G forms expressed as percentages (relative to each other).

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries there are also a few examples of G as an auxiliary and a modal, but it is not until the nineteenth century that its presence is fully established. This evidence shows in no uncertain terms that the original form for HAVE was

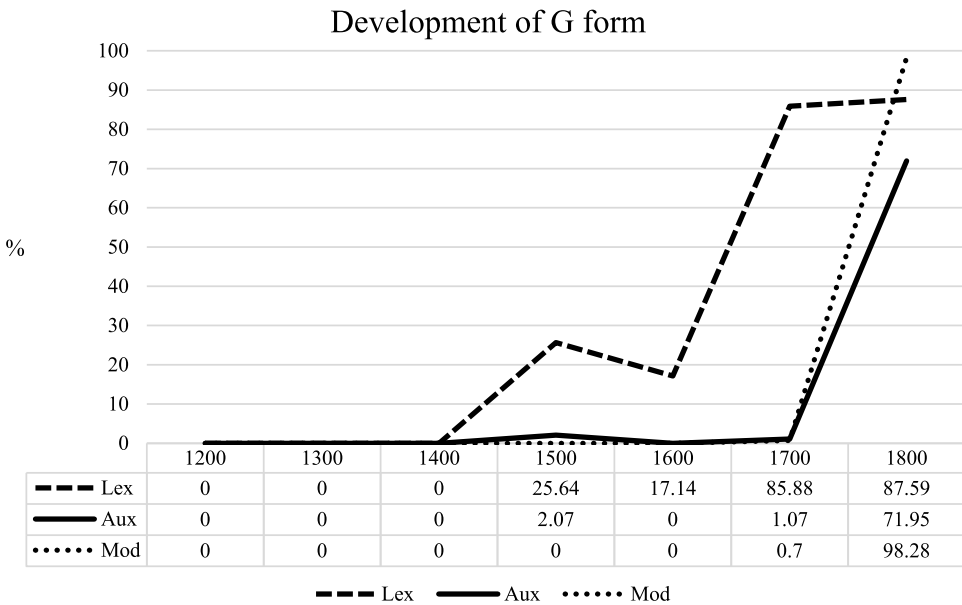


Figure 4. Overall quantitative development of the G form across its three functions.

the A form, and that the G form was introduced at a later stage, as a lexical verb first, and only later as an auxiliary and modal. At the diachronic level, too, the lexical/auxiliary distinction remains significant.

The numerical values expressed in [Figures 3](#) and [4](#) above are not to be taken in absolute terms, as, especially for 1500 and 1600, the texts analysed are not sufficiently long to allow for significant quantitative conclusions; however, they are useful as an indication of trends of the forms in relation to each other.

There are interesting qualitative remarks to be made about the distribution of the G and A forms with respect to different types of possession: although this is not a level of variation that was observed at the synchronic level, the diachronic perspective shows gradual progression along a cross-linguistically recognized path. This is the focus of the next section; the article then turns to the effect of clitics on the realization of the G form, and, finally, to nonfinite forms.

Lexical Usage: Distribution across Different Types of Possession

1500–1600

It is helpful at this stage to delve deeper into the different types of possession that have been introduced above but not fully explained. The three labels that are being adopted here, and which are most relevant to the data at hand, are selected from among a total of seven categories: physical, temporary, permanent, inalienable, abstract, inanimate inalienable and inanimate alienable possession.³¹ They are characterized as follows:

Physical: Possessor and possessee are physically associated with one another at reference time; the possessor is a human being; the possessee is a concrete item; and the two are in spatial proximity.

Inalienable: The possessee is conceived of typically as being inseparable from the possessor, e.g. a body part or a relative; the possessor is a human being; the possessee is a concrete item; and the relationship between them is usually permanent.

Abstract: The possessee is a concept that is not visible or tangible, like a disease, a feeling, or some other psychological state; the possessor is a human being; the possessee is abstract; the possessor is not in control; and the relationship between them is usually temporary.

If we view physical possession, in which HAVE can be readily substituted by ‘to own’, as the (proto)typical instances of possession, cases of abstract possession appear to be far removed from the concept of ownership. Naturally, the question arises of whether these are to be considered cases of possession at all.³² They are, at best, peripheral, and in a process of grammaticalization such as the one investigated here, the general tendency to move from the concrete to the abstract may suggest that the G form would be extended first of all to instances of clear-cut physical possession, and only in a second stage, as metaphorical extension, to cases of abstract possession.³³

This prediction is in part borne out. If we turn to the first cases of G lexical, which in the 1500s add up to 27.42% of all instances of expression of possession, as reported in [Figure 3](#), we find a mixture of physical, inalienable, and abstract possession. The overall results for the 1500s are given in [Figure 5](#): while it is evident that the A form dominates in the expression of all instances of possession, there is also an

Distribution of A and G forms across types of possession 1500s

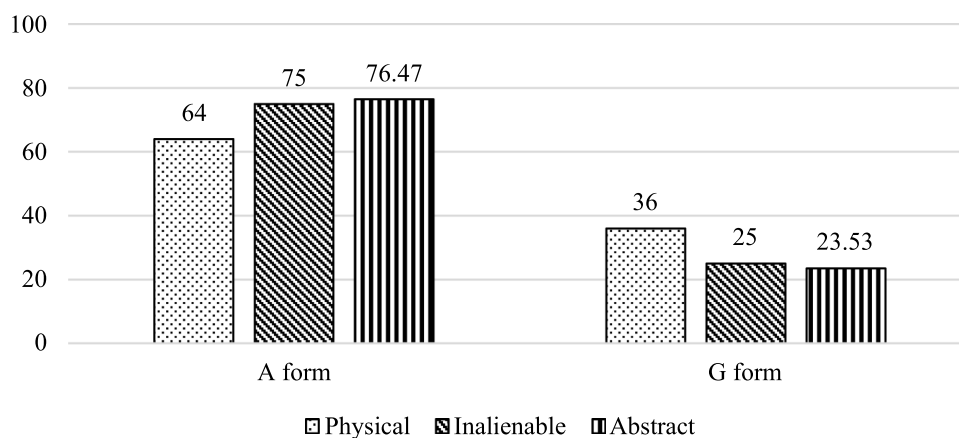


Figure 5. Breakdown of type of possession expressed by A and G forms, 1500s.

indication that the G form is more frequent with physical possession than it is with both inalienable and abstract possession.

Looking at individual texts, in *La Guerra de' Nicolotti e Castellani* (1521) (henceforth *La Guerra*), the distribution of the two forms does not appear to be clear cut: there is a certain degree of fluidity, in that both forms can figure in the same sentence or with the same verbs (i.e. have heart, have desire, have fear), as the following minimal pairs demonstrate.

- (13) a. *Tota, che à più cuor che no ga un drago, ...*
'Tota, who has more courage than a dragon, ...'
b. *Maledetto chi g'ha voglia ...*
'Cursed may be he who wishes ...'
c. ... *Vien su, sti à voglia che te rompa el sgnefo.*
'Come up, if you wish that I smash your face'
d. *Gaveu paura de tre bastonae?*
'Are you afraid of a few blows by a club?'
e. *I à paura, siben, sia amazzao?*
'Are they afraid that he may be killed?'

The overall distribution of the two forms in *La Guerra* is represented in [Table 1](#), and we can see that while the A form is dominant in all types of possession, especially so in cases of inalienable and abstract possession, the use of the G form is marginally more frequent in expressions of physical possession over abstract and inalienable. If we then turn to the second main text for the 1500s, *Rime tolte da una raccolta intitolata La Caravana* (1578) (henceforth *Rime*), the relative distribution of the A and G forms is strikingly sharp, as shown in [Table 2](#).

Although the G form is not dominant in any of the types of possession, and once again the overall number of occurrences of both forms is far too low to draw any firm conclusions, the total absence of the G form from expressions of abstract possession is

Table 1. Overview of expression of possession in *La Guerra* (1521).

	Physical	Inalienable	Abstract
A form	9 64.29%	6 75%	22 73.33%
G form	5 35.71%	2 25%	8 26.66%

Table 2. Overview of expression of possession in *Rime* (1578).

	Physical	Inalienable	Abstract
A form	6 60%	2 66.66%	5 100%
G form	4 40%	1 33.33%	0 0%

noticeable, as is a slight increase in its ratio to the A form in instances of physical possession. Some examples from *Rime* are shown in (14).

- (14) a. *Ti gaverà una calza, e l'altra no, ...*
 'You will have one sock but not the other'.
 b. *Ti gaverà po' in dosso un soto-casso ...*
 'You will then have on you an undergarment, ...'
 c. *Chi no ga soldi ...*
 'Who has no money ...'

In the 1600s, we find a somewhat heterogeneous situation. In one of the texts considered, *Canzone* by Giovanni Querini, the only instances of the G form express physical possession, while the A form expresses both physical and abstract possession. In the *Canzonetta* by Paolo Britti, there are no instances of the G form, and in *L'Ipocrisia*, a satire that could possibly belong to the following century (because of the uncertainty around the author's date of birth), there are very few instances of the G form, for both physical and abstract possession. The overview of possession in the 1600s is summarized in [Figure 6](#), revealing a tendency for the G form to be marginally more frequent with physical possession:

1700–1800

In the eighteenth century, there is a sharp increase in the use of the G form for possession: it is found in over 80% of all occurrences, relegating the A form to the remaining 20% or so. The texts for this century, two of Carlo Goldoni's plays, *Il Campiello* (1756) and *Sior Todero Brontolon* (1761, *Todero*), are an accurate representation of the language of the lower classes, and the common, everyday dimension of the situations that act as a backdrop to the dialogue ensures its genuinity.³⁴ It is useful to compare the way all three usages of HAVE are lexicalized in these texts: [Figure 7](#) summarizes the findings, highlighting the supremacy of the G form in its lexical use, and its almost complete absence from both auxiliary and modal uses.

Homing in on the lexical use, while for both physical and inalienable possession we exclusively find the G form, with expressions of abstract possession there are both A and G forms. This means, conversely, that at this stage, the A form was on its way out

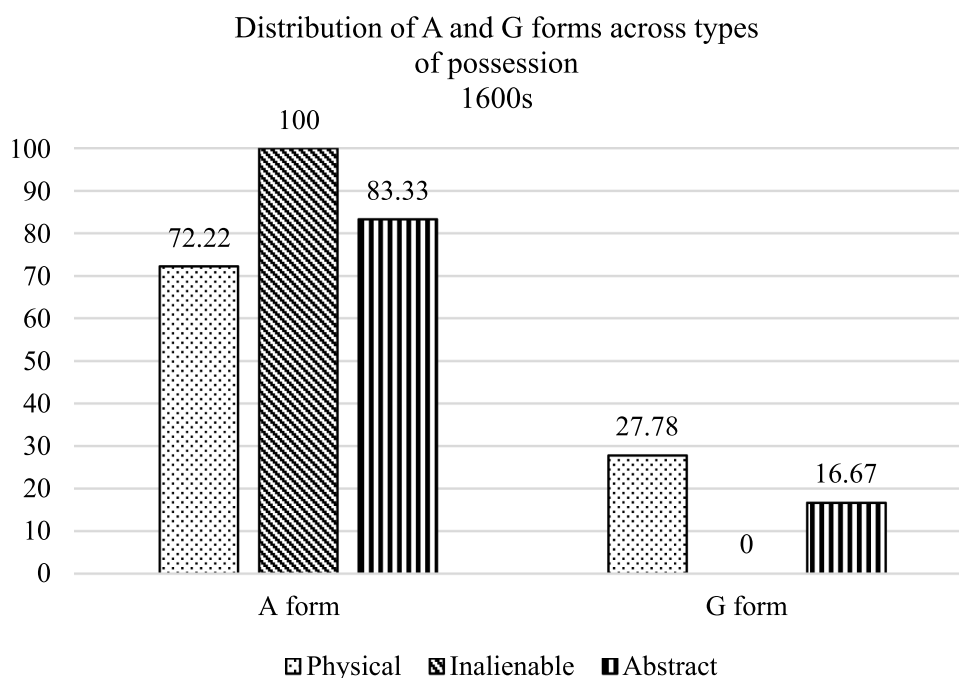


Figure 6. Breakdown of type of possession expressed by A and G forms, 1600s.

and only used to express abstract possession. The token occurrences for the different instances in the 1700s are quantitatively sufficient to draw some generalizations: as the G form is taking over the expression of possession, the A form is relegated to the category of abstract possession. This is shown in Figure 8.

There are further insights to be gained by zooming in further and focusing on the expressions of abstract possession. Most of the examples of the A form with abstract possession are instances of *aver paura* 'to be afraid', and there are also a couple of *avere l'onore di* 'to have the honour of', and some isolated examples of *avere motivo di* 'to have reason to', *aver bisogno di* 'to have need to' and *avere stima* 'to admire'. The common denominator for these expressions is that they are all expressions of mental feelings,³⁵ '... emotions (fear, worry, restlessness), moral states such as trust, being wrong or right, and other abstract states, like hurry and age'. These contrast with physical feelings, such as *aver fame/sete/caldo/freddo/sonno* etc. 'to be hungry/thirsty/hot/cold/sleepy' etc., and physical pains and diseases, such as *avere la febbre/mal di stomaco/mal di testa/mal di denti* etc. 'to have a temperature/a stomach-ache/a headache/a toothache etc.'³⁶

A study of the diffusion of HAVE with abstract possession (have-AP) constructions, typical of the Romance languages, to the circum-Mediterranean area (which, historically, typically expressed the relation using the verb 'to be') under the influence of contact with Italo-Romance, establishes an implicational hierarchy in the order of extension of the have-AP construction:³⁷

(15) physical feelings > mental feelings

If a language makes use of HAVE to express mental feelings, it will also do so to express

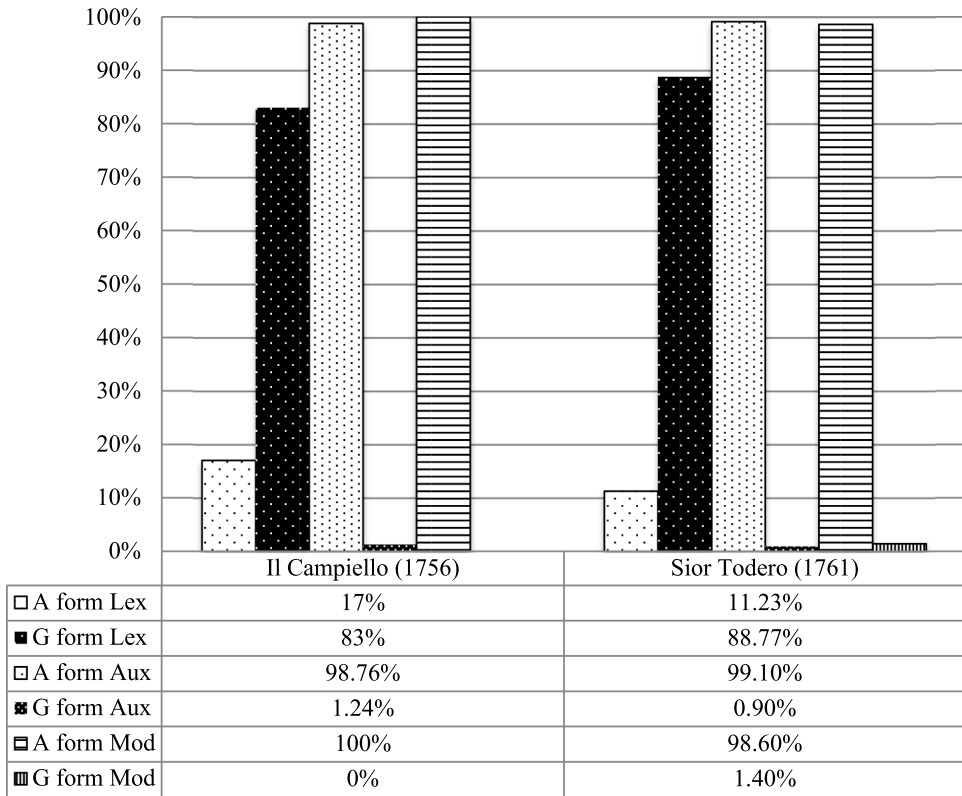


Figure 7. Overview of A and G forms usages in Carlo Goldoni’s plays.

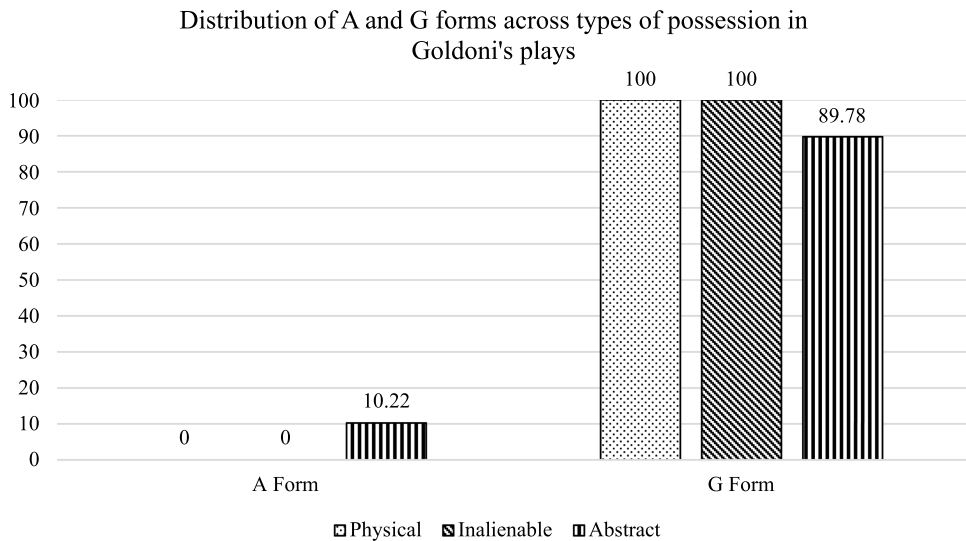


Figure 8. Breakdown of types of possession expressed by A and G forms in Goldoni’s plays.

Table 3. Distribution of A and G forms in Venetian poetry of the 1800s.

Lexical		Auxiliary		Modal	
A form	G form	A form	G form	A form	G form
24.5%	75.5%	80.22%	19.78%	100%	0%

physical feelings, but not the other way round: that is, the spread of the HAVE construction starts with expressions of physical feelings and extend to mental feelings subsequently.

Although in the Venetian data it is only within the category of abstract possession that we find the A form, it is also the case that abstract possession is not exclusively expressed by the A form: assuming a process of extension of the G form from expressions of physical possession, we can interpret the instances of A seen above as residues, as the G form has taken over expressions of physical feeling and is extending to those of mental feeling. The following examples show that both the A and G forms can be used to express mental feelings (16a–d); the only example of a physical feeling is realized by the G form (16e):

- (16) a. *Ho sempre paura che ghe sia del mal.*
 'I am always afraid that there is evil.'
 b. *Causa vu, che no gh'avè spirito, che no gh'avè condotta, che gh'avè paura a parlar.*
 'Your fault, you who do not have spirit, you who do not know how to behave, you who are afraid of speaking.'
 c. *Perméttela che abbia l'onor de umiliarghe la mia servitù?*
 'Will you concede that it is my honour to offer you my services?'
 d. *Bisogna che el gh'abbia una gran premura.*
 'He needs to be in a great hurry.'
 e. *No, no, dasseno; ho caminà, no gh'ho freddo.*
 'No, no, really; I have walked, I am not cold.'

Turning now to the nineteenth century (the texts analysed are two of Giacinto Gallina's plays, *Le Baruffe in farnegia* and *Nissun va al monte*, from the second half of the nineteenth century, and a collection of poems edited by Bartolommeo Gamba), once again we are met with a mixed picture. In the poetry texts, G is the most frequent form as a lexical verb, while the A form dominates both as an auxiliary and modal, as shown in Table 3.

In Gallina's plays, however, we find a radically different situation, in which the G form dominates across the three usages, most notably in 98.28% of all modal instances, as shown in Table 4. A possible explanation for this great discrepancy lies in the different genre represented by the two, in that plays, just as noted for Goldoni's, tend to use language that closely represents the spoken variety of the time, while poems are more likely to be linguistically conservative.

In terms of its lexical use, despite the numerical differences highlighted above, in both genres we find that the G form has completely taken over physical and inalienable possession, and the A form only occurs with abstract possession. This is summarized in Figure 9.

The discussion in this section has revealed the following:

Table 4. Distribution of A and G forms in Gallina's plays, 1800s.

Lexical		Auxiliary		Modal	
A form	G form	A form	G form	A form	G form
12.41%	87.59%	28.05%	71.95%	1.72%	98.28%

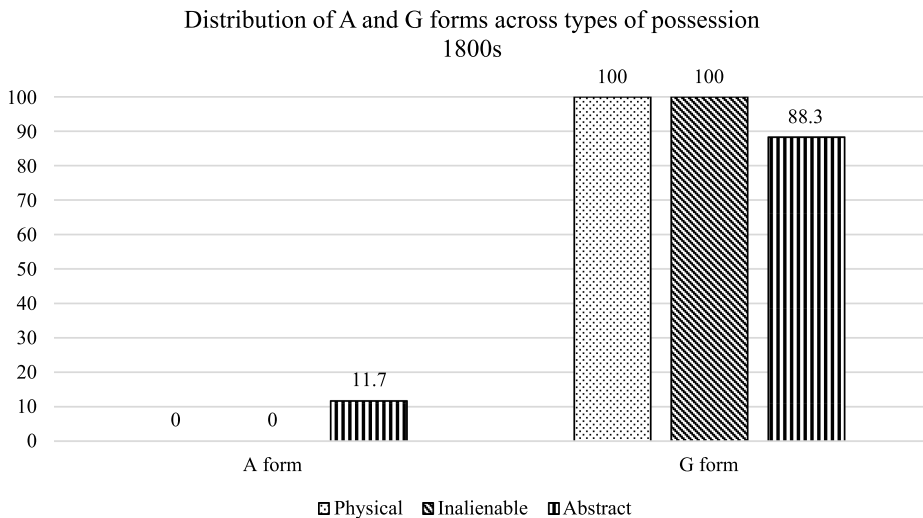


Figure 9. Breakdown of types of possession expressed by A and G forms, 1800s.

- i. While the A form is present from the beginning of the written records, the G form only appears in the fourteenth century.
- ii. The first attestations of the G form are of its lexical use.
- iii. Its appearance as an auxiliary and modal dates to the nineteenth century.
- iv. As the G form expands, the A form loses some of its functions: the first one to go is the lexical one.
- v. Within the lexical function, further broken down into physical, inalienable and abstract possession, the spread of the G form in the fifteenth century starts with physical possession, and then gradually extends to inalienable and abstract.
- vi. Within abstract possession, a further distinction between mental and physical feelings shows that when the G form expands to it, it starts from physical feelings.
- vii. Conversely, when the A form begins to disappear from the expression of abstract possession, it starts from physical feelings.

We return to the discussion of these details in the final section. Now, we address the interaction of complement proclitics and the A and G forms, and how they are distributed across infinitives.

Interaction of the A and G Forms with Complement Proclitics and the Infinitive

As discussed in the previous section, the G form appears in the 1500s as a lexical verb, and although there are also some sporadic occurrences of it as an auxiliary, it is in the 1700s and 1800s that the G form establishes itself across the three functions. The synchronic survey revealed that in some Italo-Romance varieties the presence of a complement proclitic can block the realization of the G form; due to restrictions on the availability of data, this was based only on an observation of the auxiliary function. The diachronic texts similarly do not offer much evidence of the co-occurrence of lexical HAVE and

complement proclitics: the diachronic discussion is therefore mainly focused on the auxiliary usage, with some reflections on the modal one too, and necessarily centres around the texts from the 1700s and 1800s.

The synchronic study of the impact of proclitics yielded two generalizations ((9) and (10) above), in which the partitive and, marginally, dative–accusative clusters were identified as those that most often inhibited the appearance of the G form in those varieties that had it as an auxiliary. These are also the two that have the strongest blocking effect diachronically.

In the 1500s and 1600s, all instances of complement proclitics with both lexical and auxiliary usages co-occur with the A forms. In the 1700s, when there are no complement clitics, lexical HAVE is consistently realized as G (17a); auxiliary and modal HAVE is mostly realized as A (17b,c). When there are clitics, the G form is retained in the lexical usage (17d), and the A form is found for the auxiliary and modal usages (17e,f, examples from *Toderò*):

- (17) a. *Grazie al cielo, gh'ho casa mia, e ghe vorave far véder che no gh'ho bisogno de lori.* (LEX)
'Thanks heavens, I have my own home, and I will want to show them that I do not need (lit. 'have no need of') them.'
- b. *El xe in tabarro. Mi no gh'ho osservà, se el gh'abbia anca la spada.* (AUX)
'He is in his cloak. I have not observed if he also has a sword.'
- Son paron mi, e chi magna el mio pan, ha da far quel che voggio mi.* (MOD)
'I am the master, and who eats my bread, must do what I want.'
- d. *Fin che sti occhi xe averti, sto gusto nol lo gh'averà.* (LEX + Acc)
'Until these eyes are open, this pleasure he will not have (it).'
- e. *Mio missier li ha volesti tor in casa per farme despetto.* (AUX + Acc)
'My husband has wanted to take them in to spite me.'
- f. *Chi magna el mio pan, m'ha da rispettar.* (MOD + Acc)
'Who eats my bread must respect me.'

In the 1800s, in all three functions we see the G form consistently co-occurring with the accusative clitic (18a–c), and the A form consistently with the partitive (18d–f) (examples from *La Baruffe in famegia* (18a–e) and *Nissun va al monte* (18f)):

- (18) a. *Manco mal che l'amia lo ga in bona!* (LEX + Acc)
'Luckyly, aunty likes him (lit. 'has him in good)!'
- b. *La go mandada a tor del zùcaro* (AUX + Acc)
'I sent her to buy some sugar.'
- c. *Sogio diventà el diavolo che tuti me gabia da scampar?* (MOD + Acc)
'Have I become the devil that everybody must avoid me?'
- d. *Se ela no gavarà creanza co' Ubaldo, mi no ghe n'avarò co' siora Carlota.* (LEX + Part)
'If she will not be courteous (lit. 'have courtesy') with Ubaldo, I will not be (lit. 'have of-it') with Mrs Carlota.'
- e. *Le tovagie xe sète perché la lavandera ghe n'à perso una.* (AUX + Part)
'The tablecloths are seven because the washer has lost one of them'.
- f. *In casa mia no ghe n'ha da esser de ste carte.* (MOD + Part)
'In my house there must not be such papers'.

With datives, reflexives, and dative–accusative clusters, we see both G and A forms in the auxiliary, but only G in the modal: this would suggest that before the G form was fully established with proclitics in its auxiliary function, it was already firmly extended to the modal. This is not unexpected if we consider examples such as (19): the transitivity of 'to say' opens a possibility for ambiguity, where *cossa* 'what' can either be the direct object of HAVE, therefore triggering an abstract possession interpretation (i.e. 'what things do you have that you want to tell me?'), or it could be the direct object of 'to say', triggering the deontic reading (i.e. 'what must you tell me?'):

- (19) *Cossa me **gala da dir** comare? (Nissun va al monte, 1800s)*
 'What do you have to tell me friend?'

Incidentally, the only potential modal usage of the G form in the 1700s occurs exactly with the verb 'to say':

- (20) Pellegrin: *Se la xe contenta, ghe vorave parlar.*
 'Pellegrin: "If you are happy, I'd like to speak to you."
 [...] Todero: *Cossa **gh'aveu da dirme?** Qualche strambezzo de vostra muggier?*
 Todero: "What do you have to/must you tell me? Some nonsense by your wife?"

Although in the 1800s modal usages of the G form co-occur with a variety of intransitive verbs (most frequently with *andar* 'to go' and *eser* 'to be'), its collocation with *dir* 'to say' is the most frequent, potentially supporting the suggestion of *dir* acting as a bridging context for a shift from the lexical to the modal function:³⁸ the modal usage could have started as an extension of the lexical usage (following the structure HAVE_{Ilex} X *da* V_{inf}), and it eventually came to express deontic modality.³⁹

A similar path was also suggested for the shift from lexical to auxiliary usage,⁴⁰ and the contexts that acted as a bridge were indeed co-occurrences with transitive verbs, in which HAVE functioned loosely as a lexical verb and the past participle predicated the resulting state in the direct object. Interestingly, we find this exact construction in *Todero* (1761):

- (21) [...] *i so vecchi xe vegnui co le sgalmare, e casa mia xe più de cent'anni che la **gh'ha negozio impiantà.***
 'His elders came with clogs, and my family (lit. 'house') it is longer than one hundred year that it has [a] shop established.'

Finally, a remark on the infinitive: although the G form appears in the 1500s as a lexical verb, there are no instances of an infinitive G form in the corpus, and all occurrences of infinitive HAVE are realized as the A form. This is the case also for past participles and gerunds.

Concluding, the diachronic data confirm that in the gradual extension of the G form to constructions with proclitics, it first established itself with the accusative clitics, across the three functions, and with datives, reflexives, and dative–accusative clusters in the modal usage earlier than the auxiliary one. Partitive clitics, on the other hand, continued to trigger the A form exclusively. These results echo the synchronic microvariation.

The Relation between Synchrony and Diachrony

The synchronic microvariation of the distribution of the A and G forms revealed interesting patterns that led to the formulation of four generalizations. These were claimed to be due to the gradual grammaticalization of the G form, the result of a semantic bleaching of the locative *ghe* and the degree of its fusion onto the *avér* form. The diachronic exploration of those same contexts has confirmed the synchronic claims almost in the same way they were formulated, revealing a good degree of continuity between the two dimensions.

The G form appeared first and foremost as a lexical verb, and it extended to the auxiliary function three centuries later, making very plausible the claim that the original function of G was to maintain the morphological distinction between the lexical and the auxiliary verbs.⁴¹ From a synchronic perspective, 'The more grammaticalized a form, the more frequent it is',⁴² and, conversely, the more frequent a grammaticalized

form, the older the stage it represents. The higher number of varieties that have G as their lexical verb, as opposed to those that also have it as an auxiliary synchronically (generalization (4)), finds an explanation diachronically in terms of the ordering of the domains to which the G form extended.

Related to this is the interaction between the G form and complement proclitics. It is well known that there is an interaction between clitics which often results in one given clitic being suppressed in the presence of another. The inhibition of the G form, which would be otherwise present, in co-occurrence with a clitic indicates that the degree of fusion between *g* and *avér* is not complete, and the particle retains some of its original properties. There are further distinctions, in that not all clitics are equal in this respect, and at the diachronic level, too, the higher degree of incompatibility between the G form and the partitive clitic is witnessed. The corpus has no evidence of co-occurrence of the G form with partitive clitics, but we see it co-occurring with accusative clitics from the 1700s: similarly to what was already seen for the lexical G form, the high frequency in synchrony of G form + accusative clitic (and the very low incidence of G form + partitive clitic) is reflected in the diachronic ordering of the extension of the G form to different types of clitics (generalizations (9) and (10)).

Finally, the diachronic data show no instance of the G form as an infinitive, in either lexical or auxiliary usage: extension of the G form to the infinitive is likely to be a relatively young development, witness the low incidence of G infinitives at the synchronic level.

There are, however, also signs of discontinuity, in that the diachronic data reveal distinctions that are no longer visible synchronically: the differentiation of the lexical function into three subtypes, physical, inalienable, and abstract possession, and, within the latter, a further two-way distinction into mental and physical feelings, are relevant for the diachronic expansion of the G form, but are no longer encoded synchronically. As mentioned above, it was noted that there 'is considerable evidence that in the process of language change some functions are more vulnerable than others':⁴³ therefore, 'The question that needs to be explored is which functions are more likely to be lost and which are more likely to persist over time', and to consider the existence of a hierarchy of functions.⁴⁴ The lexical/auxiliary distinction, which persists, must rank higher in the hierarchy than the further distinctions within the lexical category, which are lost: visualizing these in terms of a tree-like structure (as in Figure 10), they can be represented, respectively, as higher-level (macro) and lower-level (micro) distinctions.

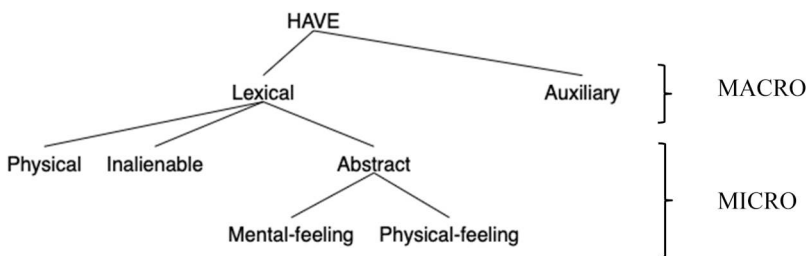


Figure 10. Distinctions within HAVE.

It was suggested that a factor that could affect the persistence of a function of HAVE was its scope. We reinterpret this as referring to the position of the function within the hierarchy: the higher, the more powerful. Relating this back to the hierarchy in Figure 10, we propose that higher-level or macro-distinctions are more likely to persist, while lower-level or micro-distinctions are more vulnerable to being lost. The reason behind this could be linked to how salient a given function is: macro-distinctions may be more significant than micro-ones, either at the cognitive level or in terms of language use and what is salient for the speakers.⁴⁵

To conclude, through a comparison of synchronic microvariation and diachronic gradualness this article has brought to light some interesting correlations as well as instances of a mismatch between the two levels and has offered a detailed overview of the development of the form *gavér* in Venetian. Further case studies are needed to reach a generalizable explanation for all instances of discontinuity across time; the evidence discussed here, although on a small scale, has offered some thoughts for reflection on how we might explore and interpret the nature of factors that may affect the resilience of functions/features across time.

Notes

1. Among many others, Elizabeth Traugott and Ekkenard König, 'The Semantics-Pragmatics of Grammaticalization Revisited', in *Approaches to Grammaticalization*, ed. by Elizabeth Traugott and Bernd Heine, vol. 1 (John Benjamins, 1991), pp. 189–218.
2. Paul Kiparsky, 'New Perspectives in Historical Linguistics', in *The Routledge Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, ed. by Claire Bowers and Bethwyn Evans (Routledge, 2015), pp. 64–102.
3. Anna Giacalone Ramat, Caterina Mauri, and Piera Molinelli, 'Synchrony and Diachrony: Introduction to a Dynamic Interface', in *Synchrony and Diachrony: A Dynamic Interface*, ed. by Anna Giacalone Ramat, Caterina Mauri, and Piera Molinelli (John Benjamins, 2013), pp. 1–24.
4. Henning Andersen, 'Actualization and the (Uni)Directionality of change', in *Actualization: Linguistic Change in Progress*, ed. by Henning Andersen (John Benjamins, 2001), pp. 225–48.
5. Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Graeme Trousdale, 'Gradience, Gradualness and Grammaticalization: How Do They Intersect?', in *Gradience, Gradualness and Grammaticalization*, ed. by Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Graeme Trousdale (John Benjamins, 2010), pp. 19–44.
6. Sandra Paoli, 'Gradualness of Grammaticalization and Abrupt Change Reconciled: Evidence from Microvariation in Romance', *Languages*, 9.4 (2024), pp.1–16.
7. Zygmunt Frajzyngier, 'Functional Syntax and Language Change', in *The Routledge Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, ed. by Claire Bowers and Bethwyn Evans (Routledge, 2015), pp. 308–25.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 321.
9. Sandra Paoli, 'Avér o gavér? Questo è il dilemma! Microvariazione negli esiti del latino *habere* nel nord d'Italia', *Revue romane*, 55.2 (2020), pp. 283–310, <https://doi.org/10.1075/rro.19004.pao>
10. Michela Cennamo, 'Mechanisms and Paths of Grammaticalization and Reanalysis in Romance', in *Grammaticalization Scenarios from Europe and Asia*, ed. by Walter Bisang and Andrej Malchukov (De Gruyter Mouton, 2020), pp. 165–248.
11. Hans Goebel, *Atlant linguistich dl ladin dolomitich y di dialec vejins* (Reichen, 2012). The synchronic data discussed in this section have appeared in Paoli, 'Avér o gavér?': this is a condensed and modified version of sections 2, 3, and 4. The complete list of numbers of all the maps used can be found in Appendix 1.
12. Thirteenth century: *Testi veneziani del Duecento e dei primi del Trecento*, a cura di Alfredo Stussi (1253–88); *Proverbia que dicuntur super natura feminarum* (anonymous). Fourteenth century: *Tristano Veneto*. Fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries: Bartolommeo Gamba:

Raccolta di poesie in dialetto veneziano d'ogni secolo. Eighteenth century: Carlo Goldoni: *Il Campiello* (1756) and *Sior Todero Brontolon* (1761). Nineteenth century: Bartolommeo Gamba: *Raccolta di poesie in dialetto veneziano d'ogni secolo*; Giacinto Gallina, *Le Baruffe in Famiglia* (1887) and *Nissun va al monte* (1872).

13. Gerhard Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti: Morfologia* (Einaudi, 1968 p. 274); Gerhard Rohlfs, *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti: Sintassi e formazione delle parole* (Einaudi, 1969 p. 253); Alberto Zamboni, *Veneto* (Pacini, 1974 pp. 28–29); Ronnie Ferguson, *A Linguistic History of Venice* (Olschki, 2007 p. 149); Paola Benincà, 'Clitici e ausiliari: *gh ò, z é'*, in *Sui dialetti italo-romanzi: Saggi in onore di Nigel B. Vincent, The Italianist* 27 (2007), Special Supplement 1, ed. by Delia Bentley and Adam Ledgeway, (p. 28); Gianna Marcato and Flavia Ursini, *Dialetti veneti: Grammatica e storia* (Unipress, 1998: p. 325).
14. Among many others, see Christian Lehmann, *Thoughts on Grammaticalization*, 3rd edn (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2015), <<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/0babd64b-cfb2-4aeb-95a9-593397c87d6e/603353.pdf>> [accessed 26 June 2025]; Christian Lehmann, *Ten Lectures on Grammaticalization: An Introduction* (Brill, 2024).
15. With this denotation, I indicate the lexemes of the two series.
16. Marcato and Ursini, *Dialetti veneti*, p. 325.
17. Benincà, 'Clitici e ausiliari', p. 28.
18. Paoli, 'Avér o gavér? Questo è il dilemma!.
19. The term 'varieties' is used to refer to the linguistic codes that developed from Latin on Italian ground and neighbouring areas, commonly referred to as 'Italian dialects'.
20. Bernd Heine, *Possession: Cognitive Sources, Forces, and Grammaticalization* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).
21. The use of square brackets when reporting atlas data indicates that the part of the stimulus that is included within them belongs to adjacent maps rather than the one indicated in the translation, often seen with longer sentences.
22. Reflexive clitics with the auxiliary HAVE can only be observed in those varieties that, unlike standard Italian, have generalized the HAVE auxiliary to all types of verbs in the formation of the analytic past.
23. The maximum value on the y axis has been fixed at 50 to allow a more visible representation of those columns that represent very low values.
24. There are in fact four varieties that display this pattern: the fourth, Breno, seems to be an outlier, as it has the A form for the auxiliary infinitive. A closer look reveals that for the finite forms of the auxiliary in Breno, both A and G are recorded, suggesting that the G form has not fully consolidated in this usage yet — not aligning, therefore, with the other three varieties.
25. Nigel Vincent, 'The Development of Auxiliaries HABERE and ESSE in Romance', in *Studies in the Romance Verb: Essays Offered to Joe Cremona on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. by Nigel Vincent and Martin Harris (Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 71–96.
26. Paoli, 'Gradualness of Grammaticalization and Abrupt Change Reconciled', p. 299.
27. *Ibid.*
28. For details, see *ibid.*
29. Ferguson, *A Linguistic History of Venice*.
30. Several expressions can be used to express deontic modality in Italo-Romance (e.g. *ci vuole*, *bisogna*, *tocca*, *si deve*, *ha da/di*, and the inflected forms of *volere*), and each variety has at least two forms, which variously express different degrees of necessity or obligation. The data extracted from ALD-II are not consistent, in that for those varieties that have at their disposal more than one strategy, mostly only one was produced, making it impossible to know whether a form was simply omitted or did not exist at all for that variety, and thus preventing any meaningful generalizations on the presence (or absence) of the G form. Therefore, there are no synchronic data of deontic use that can be compared to the diachronic ones.
31. Heine, *Possession*.
32. Leon Stassen, *Predicative Possession* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 30.

33. This is very much in line with the general idea that we ‘typically conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical’. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 59).
34. In Goldoni’s own words, the play ‘è scritta coi termini più ricercati del basso rango e colle frasi ordinarissime della plebe’ (is written with the most distinctive vocabulary used by the lower class and with everyday expressions used by the common people). Carlo Goldoni, ‘L’autore a chi legge’, in *Il campiello*, in *Opere di Carlo Goldoni*, ed. Gianfranco Folena (Mursia, 1969), p. 604.
35. Chiara Fedriani, Gianguido Manzelli, and Paolo Ramat, ‘Gradualness in Contact-Induced Constructional Replication: The Abstract Possession Construction in the Circum-Mediterranean Area’, in *Synchrony and Diachrony: A Dynamic Interface*, ed. by Anna Giacalone Ramat, Caterina Mauri, and Piera Molinelli (John Benjamins, 2013), pp. 391–418.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Gianguido Manzelli, Paolo Ramat, and Elisa Roma, ‘Remarks on Marginal Possession: Are Feelings Owned?’, in *Mediterranean Languages: Papers from the MedTyp workshop*, ed. by Paolo Ramat and Tomas Stolz (Universitätsverlag Brockmeyer, 2002), pp. 223–45.
38. Nicholas Evans and David Wilkins, ‘In the Mind’s Ear: The Semantic Extensions of Perception Verbs in Australian Languages’, *Language*, 76 (2000), pp. 546–92. Bernd Heine, ‘On the Role of Context in Grammaticalization’, in *New Reflections on Grammaticalization*, ed. by Ilse Wischer and Gabriele Diewald (John Benjamins, 2002), pp. 83–101.
39. There is a link between the two: in a variety of languages, both deontic modality and possession are expressed with the same lexical element. Bronwyn Bjorkman and Elizabeth Cowper, ‘Possession and Necessity: From Individuals to Worlds’, *Lingua*, 182 (2016), pp. 30–48.
40. Nigel Vincent, ‘The Development of the Auxiliaries HABERE and ESSE in Romance’.
41. Paoli, ‘*Avér o gavér?* Questo è il dilemma!.
42. Traugott and Heine, ‘Introduction’, in *Approaches to Grammaticalization*, vol. 2, pp. 1–14.
43. Frajzyngier, ‘Functional Syntax and Language Change’, p. 321.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Vincent Boswijk and Matt Coler, ‘What Is Saliency?’, *Open Linguistics* 6.1 (2020), pp. 713–22. <<https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2020-0042>> [accessed 27 June 2025].

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ORCID

Sandra Paoli  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5543-0310>

Appendix***ALD-II Maps Consulted***

	Lexical usage of HAVE			Auxiliary usage of HAVE		Both usages
	Inalienable possession	Physical possession	Abstract possession	Without clitics	With clitics	Infinitive
Maps	49, 59, 859	375–7, 384–7	33, 156, 160, 167, 171, 179, 372– 4, 388, 571, 1007	20, 218, 230, 232, 323, 378–83, 466, 501, 509, 517, 573, 747, 762, 827, 955, 1017, 1018, 1025, 1027, 1039	24, 139, 140, 146, 217, 282, 298, 329, 510, 524, 544, 572, 603, 608, 610, 861, 957, 1030, 1054	33, 160, 217, 1017